



Counter-Elite Populism and Civil Society in Poland: PiS's Strategies of Elite Replacement

Stanley Bill 

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

This article shows how Poland's ruling party, Law and Justice (PiS), is attempting to apply its general strategy of “elite replacement” in a modified way to civil society. Since independent civil society organizations are not subject to arbitrary state control of appointments (unlike public institutions), this strategy has required a more complex dual approach of pressure and promotion. Organizations perceived as hostile to the party and its values have been subject to the withdrawal of state support and smear campaigns. By contrast, organizations that are politically or ideologically linked to the party have found support in the form of new public funds and other institutional assistance. This article examines the practical functioning and consequences of these processes through two main examples: (1) a state-sponsored campaign against one of Poland's largest independent charity organizations, the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity and (2) the funding of multiple right-wing NGOs friendly to PiS by the newly established National Freedom Institute. The article shows how PiS's dual strategy in civil society reinforces its political narratives through support of the broader right-wing cultural narratives that underpin them. At the same time, it demonstrates how funding of friendly organizations directly strengthens party structures by fostering the development of new political and administrative cadres. By analysing PiS's specific methods of pressure and promotion in the sphere of civil society, the article shows the intertwining of political and cultural narratives and goals within a right-wing populist framework.

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Since coming to power in 2015, Poland's United Right (*Zjednoczona Prawica*)—led by Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS)—has implemented a program it calls “the good change.” Alongside flagship social spending initiatives and a right-wing cultural agenda, the coalition has made sweeping personnel changes in the judiciary, civil service, public media, state-owned companies, cultural institutions, and other public bodies. In accordance with a partially populist logic, the coalition has sought to remove a “bad” establishment elite from state institutions, replacing it with a “good” elite supposedly representing the interests of “the nation.”¹ This process of “elite replacement” has emulated Viktor Orbán's earlier Hungarian practices of state “occupation” or “colonization.”² Yet the ambition of

PiS's program of change—like Orbán's—extends far beyond institutions under government control. Indeed, party leader Jarosław Kaczyński has called for the establishment of a “new social hierarchy” that would reach deep into civil society.³ From his point of view, only a total reconstruction of Poland's social elites can complete the country's “unfinished” post-1989 transition.

Kaczyński and PiS claim that an “old-new elite” constituting an alliance of post-communist and liberal post-Solidarity forces has monopolized political, economic, and cultural power since 1989. According to the party's 2014 program, this negative “pseudo-elite” is beholden to foreign interests, showing a “distaste . . . for the [Polish] state” and a “suspicious attitude towards the nation.”⁴ This outlook also supposedly dominates among liberal civil society, media, and cultural elites for whom “the very use of the word ‘nation’ is unwelcome.”⁵ As Kaczyński explains, all these groups are submissively peripheral, “aping” western trends in betrayal of authentic Polish interests and values.⁶ This treacherous “pseudo-elite” must be replaced by what he calls the “counter-elite,” a set of PiS-affiliated groups more committed to the promotion of national interests.⁷ In this sense, PiS's populism is a “counter-elite” populism: not hostile to elites per se, but positing a fundamental conflict between the *wrong* elite and “the people”—represented, in turn, by the *true* (counter-)elite.⁸

In its purges of state institutions, PiS has used existing appointment powers, repeating the practices of earlier governments on a larger scale and at a more rapid pace.⁹ However, in the cases of the civil service and public media, the party has introduced new legislation to accelerate this process.¹⁰ In the judiciary, its repeated attempts to replace judges under new laws have been partially stymied by a combination of domestic resistance and external pressure from the European Commission and the European Court of Justice.¹¹ In this respect, the Polish case has differed from Orbán's earlier implementation of similar practices in Hungary, as the lack of a constitutional majority and a more determined EU response have created additional obstacles for PiS. Nevertheless, the party has successfully used a raft of ad hoc measures to achieve many of its aims, facilitating what Wojciech Sadurski characterizes as an informal system change through the cumulative “breakdown” of constitutional norms.¹²

But how can these strategies of elite replacement or “colonization” be implemented in areas not directly under the government's power? Since independent civil society organizations are not subject to arbitrary state control, PiS has adopted a more complex dual approach of negative *pressure* and positive *promotion*. Once again, these responses follow an earlier Hungarian playbook of harassment of civil society opponents and support of friendly organizations.¹³ PiS has exploited a wide variety of formal and informal instruments of state power to deliver its dual strategy. Organizations perceived as hostile to the party and its values have been subject to the withdrawal of state support, smear campaigns mounted by party-controlled public media, and even police raids. By contrast, organizations that are politically linked to the party or share its ideological proclivities have found generous support in the form of new public funds and other institutional assistance.

This article examines the practical functioning and wider consequences of these processes through two main examples: (1) a state-sponsored campaign against one of Poland's largest independent charity organizations, the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (*Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy*) and (2) the funding of multiple right-wing NGOs friendly to PiS by the newly-established National Freedom Institute—Center for Civil Society Development (*Narodowy Instytut Wolności—Centrum Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego*). The article shows how PiS's strategies of pressure and promotion in civil society reinforce the party's political narratives through support of the broader right-wing cultural narratives that underpin them. However, it also demonstrates how funding of friendly organizations directly strengthens party structures by fostering the development of new political and administrative cadres. In both cases, the article shows the intertwining of political and cultural narratives and goals within a right-wing populist framework.

Marta Kotwas and Jan Kubik have argued that an ongoing “symbolic thickening of public culture” in Poland has helped to put ideological flesh on the bones of PiS's “thin” populist political narrative.¹⁴ Specifically, the intensification of pre-existing nativist and national-religious tendencies in some sections of Polish society has offered opportunities for the ideological elaboration of PiS's basic post-transition dichotomy between “bad establishment elite” and “the nation.” In turn, PiS's own “thickened” rhetoric has further contributed to the general “thickening” of public culture as part of an “iterative” process.¹⁵ Weronika Grzebalska and Andrea Pető have shown how opposition to “gender ideology”—a vague term denoting advocacy of women's and LGBT rights—has constituted another key thickening agent in the “illiberal transformation” of both Poland and Hungary.¹⁶

In all cases, these “thickened” narratives function to exclude minority groups, narrowing the scope of who belongs to the national community. The specific effect of PiS's rhetoric on public opinion is beyond the scope of this article, which will concentrate on analysis of the party's discourse and changes to state funding of civil society. However, it is worth noting that some correlative evidence suggests a strengthening of anti-LGBT views and national prejudices among Poles during PiS's time in government.¹⁷

According to Kotwas and Kubik, the earlier coalescence of right-wing subcultures created a “discursive opportunity structure” for PiS's political narrative.¹⁸ This process must be understood in the context of a longer-term “cultural backlash” in response to fears of social and cultural transformation after 1989.¹⁹ The radical right League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR) had previously benefited from an earlier version of the same opportunity structure, before PiS appropriated its discourse and electorate after their ill-fated coalition of 2005–2007.²⁰ At different points in time, the backlash has focused on accession to the European Union, migration from non-European countries, “gender ideology,” “LGBT ideology,” and various other issues raised by a loose “discourse coalition” of right-wing activists, organizations, and sections of the Church.²¹ Since returning to power in 2015, PiS has used state instruments to promote these issues and associated organizations.

In short, PiS has politically exploited a rightward drift in an already conservative Polish society, and then sought to amplify this drift by supporting the “discourse coalition” that produced it.²² The PiS government’s engagement with civil society is a prime place to see this “iterative” process in action, as it reveals the circular feedback relationship of public culture with political actors and their discourse. By analysing PiS’s specific methods of pressure and promotion in the sphere of civil society, this article shows the interaction of cultural and political dimensions of its ideology and policy agenda.

Poland’s Civil Society Context and PiS’s Policy Response

The general state of civil society in Poland is an object of disagreement among scholars. According to one interpretation, traditional forms of civil society engagement have been low after 1989 in comparison with other parts of Europe. As Kerstin Jacobsson and Elżbieta Korolczuk summarize this view, civil society in Poland is “weak, passive, and nonparticipatory in nature, still in need of ‘catching up’ with Western Europe.”²³ Among the Polish scholars who have promoted this assessment is sociologist Piotr Gliški, now Minister of Culture in the PiS government and one of the key executors of its policy on civil society.²⁴ PiS’s 2014 policy program is similarly critical, describing the sector as “weak” and “marginal” in its role in public life.²⁵

Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik have challenged this prevalent view, insisting that civil society has played an important role both in Poland’s transition and in the consolidation of democracy.²⁶ Together with Michal Wenzel, they point to a steady growth in numbers of NGOs and a “spectacular” rise in volunteerism captured more clearly in domestic survey data than in standard international studies.²⁷ In a similar vein, Jacobsson and Korolczuk have argued that certain types of informal activism have been ignored by scholars, and that methodological flaws have distorted the evidence.²⁸ Nevertheless, most agree that the weight of quantitative data on formalized or institutional forms of activism still puts Poland at the lower end of European tables, especially with respect to volunteering.²⁹ Ekiert, Kubik, and Wenzel point out that various other European countries show similar levels of engagement, but concede that Poles are “not among the most civically active Europeans.”³⁰

In this general context, PiS’s 2014 program argues that Polish civil society needs to be “strengthened.”³¹ The specific diagnosis is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, the party claims that Polish civil society organizations are dangerously dependent on public funds. On the other, it says that the Polish state and its elites have not been sufficiently engaged in the development of civil society—a failure Minister Gliški describes as the “betrayal of the elite.”³² In response, PiS proposes that “the state must take systematic responsibility for the condition of the sector” through the investment of public funds.³³ In 2017, the parliament put this principle into practice

by passing legislation to create the National Freedom Institute—Center for Civil Society Development.³⁴ The stated purpose of the new institution is to improve coordination across government departments and to expand access to funds among organizations based in non-urban areas.³⁵ Minister Gliški explains that the aims are equalization, democratization, and pluralization.³⁶

Implicit in the task of “pluralization” is the assumption that civil society organizations with left or liberal ideological orientations have previously monopolized funding opportunities, especially from abroad. According to Gliški, this “ideologization” has partly derived from the “leftist” priorities of foreign foundations and the European Union.³⁷ Other scholars also acknowledge certain “imported” dimensions of civil society organization in Poland, raising the question of insufficient “local embeddedness” across Central and Eastern Europe.³⁸ Yet Ekiert, Kubik, and Wenzel reject the assessment of a lack of pluralism in Poland’s civil society.³⁹ Indeed, even Gliški himself refers to its “enormous and multidimensional internal diversity.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, a sense of structural unfairness resulting from the availability of foreign funding to liberal NGOs has been deeply felt not only within PiS but also in wider right-wing circles in Poland.⁴¹ From this point of view, the role of the Polish state should be to balance these foreign influences, and to swing the pendulum away from the supposed domination of left-wing or liberal civil society organizations.

In practice, this means *promotion* of organizations with right-wing profiles and amplification of the “thickened” cultural narratives that support PiS’s political narratives. As one commentator in government-friendly media explains, public funds are to be shifted away from “gender ideology, sex education and minority rights” towards “national and Christian values.”⁴² This article will focus later on the specific role of a major grant program of the National Freedom Institute in this process. However, this new stream of funding has merely complemented existing sources of state-guided support, including ministerial funds, state-owned companies, and European funds controlled by the government. Perhaps the best known example of such support concerns the various enterprises associated with Father Tadeusz Rydzyk and his ultra-conservative Catholic media network.

Rydzyk’s media have disseminated a “national-Catholic” ideology that PiS has promoted and exploited since it took over from LPR in the mid-2000s as the main political beneficiary of the priest’s patronage.⁴³ The party receives mostly positive coverage in his media. In return, PiS has generously rewarded him since coming to power. By the middle of 2019, Rydzyk’s multiple foundations, companies, and journalism school in Toruń had accumulated PLN 214 million of state support from a wide variety of sources, including a long list of government ministries and other state institutions.⁴⁴ Senior PiS representatives—including Kaczyński and prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki—have also frequently attended conferences at the journalism school, and made appearances at birthday celebrations of Radio Maryja, the original centerpiece of Rydzyk’s media network.

At the same time, the anti-gender, anti-LGBT, and “national-Catholic” narratives disseminated by Rydzyk’s media have been promoted by PiS and the public media under its control. Kaczyński himself has repeatedly referred to the need to defend “authentic” Polish values against “the threat brought by the shape of western culture,” specifically emphasizing that Rydzyk taught him to appreciate this threat.⁴⁵ PiS has used these narratives for explicitly political purposes in multiple election campaigns, as a resource intended to mobilize a core conservative electorate. For instance, during the 2019 parliamentary campaign, Kaczyński claimed that opposition parties supported the dangerous “gender” and LGBT “ideologies,” and that only PiS could protect “the nation” from their ideological plan to “destroy” its culture and “the family.”⁴⁶ OSCE international observers subsequently noted that “nationalist and homophobic rhetoric gave rise to a sense of threat” during the campaign.⁴⁷

Rydzyk’s circles are far from the only proprietors of these “thickened” narratives, which hold broad currency in large parts of Poland’s still somewhat heterogeneous Catholic Church. For instance, a prominent bishop, Marek Jędraszewski, has been especially vociferous on the “gender” and “LGBT” issues, describing gay rights campaigns as a “rainbow plague.”⁴⁸ In this sense, the “thickening” of public culture is a much wider phenomenon related to fears in mainstream Church circles and among other conservatives about secularization, European integration, and liberalization of Polish society.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Rydzyk’s direct political influence and media reach give him special significance. According to Kaczyński, PiS’s victory in 2015 would not have been possible without him.⁵⁰

The other plank of PiS’s dual strategy of modified elite replacement in civil society is *pressure* on organizations viewed as politically or ideologically hostile. Perhaps the most extreme example—once again following Hungarian precedents—has been a series of police raids conducted on the offices of women’s NGOs in 2017 after the “Black Protest” against proposals to tighten abortion laws.⁵¹ However, “unfriendly” organizations have more often been targeted via removal of existing state support and government-sponsored smear campaigns. Women’s rights and migrant aid organizations have been systematically cut off from previous ministerial sources of funding.⁵² PiS-controlled public media have also followed Orbán’s example by promoting conspiracy theories about organizations funded by Hungarian American businessman George Soros’s Open Society Foundations.⁵³ According to these theories, Soros-influenced liberal elites plan to destabilize the Polish state or even to destroy “the nation” by triggering a migrant invasion of “multicultural chaos.”⁵⁴

This approach fits the definition of what Grzebalska and Pető have described as “securitization” of NGOs—a discourse that shifts certain issues and groups beyond the realm of ordinary politics into a category of “existential threat” to the community.⁵⁵ The same approach is also evident in government and public media representations of NGOs campaigning for LGBT rights in Poland. A few days before the parliamentary elections of October 2019, public television screened a

documentary film entitled “Invasion” (*Inwazja*), which depicted LGBT rights activists as a foreign-backed threat to Polish children, religion, values, and the very biological continuation of the nation.⁵⁶

Yet perhaps the most incongruous case of pressure on an independent NGO has been the government-sponsored campaign against the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, an organization best known for fundraising for children’s health care. Indeed, it is precisely the apparent innocuousness of the Orchestra that best exposes the far-reaching ambition and application of PiS’s strategy of elite replacement in the sphere of civil society. As a supposed product of the liberal establishment elites of the post-communist “Third Polish Republic,” the Great Orchestra has become the target of a series of attacks with both cultural and political dimensions. These attacks began in the 2000s in Father Rydzyk’s media circles as part of a broader struggle for moral supremacy. More recently, they have been promoted by the PiS-led government as a consequence and continuation of its “thickened” political narrative.

Pressure on the “Establishment Elite”: The Campaign against the Great Orchestra

The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity is one of Poland’s largest post-1989 civil society initiatives, an independent charitable operation that has mobilized millions of Polish citizens and raised over PLN 1 billion since its inception in 1993.⁵⁷ The money raised by the charity supports public health care. Above all, the Great Orchestra is known for the purchase of medical equipment for hospitals and clinics, especially for children’s wards. The Orchestra was founded by Jerzy Owsiak, an eccentric host of television programs for young people focused on Western youth culture and rock music. His musical interests also led him to establish the Woodstock Station music festival (now called the Pol’and’Rock Festival), originally as a special additional event for the Great Orchestra’s volunteers.

The Great Orchestra initiative takes the form of an annual fundraising drive culminating in outdoor concerts in cities around the country and a televised studio show in late January. The drives mobilize large numbers of Polish citizens, especially young people, who volunteer to collect money in the charity’s branded tins. According to the charity, more than 120,000 volunteers participated in the final drive in 2019, collecting more than 175 million PLN.⁵⁸ The conspicuous red heart-shaped stickers given to donors, and widely worn, create a climate of visible celebration of the social act of giving. This aspect of ostentatious pride in charitable giving was especially novel in the early 1990s, as private charity had been discouraged under the communist regime.⁵⁹ The Great Orchestra’s fundraising drives also attracted support from state institutions, including logistical assistance from emergency services and coverage in public media. These relationships have come into question under the PiS-led government.

Almost immediately after the party's victory in 2015, one ultra-conservative PiS MP suggested that any state functionaries participating in the Orchestra's campaign should be forced to resign.⁶⁰ In 2017, a state-owned bank ended its sponsorship agreement with the Orchestra.⁶¹ In the same year, state television ceased to broadcast the January finale of the fundraising drive, which moved to the private TVN network.⁶² Since this transition, public television channels and other media have given little information on the Orchestra's fundraising activities. In 2017, the main evening news bulletin digitally removed a Great Orchestra sticker from the jacket of an opposition politician being interviewed.⁶³ Hostility was even directed at the Orchestra's young volunteers, with editor-in-chief of the flagship public television news program describing them as a "ridiculous sect."⁶⁴

In 2019, the campaign against the Orchestra escalated significantly on public television. On 10 January, less than a week before the fundraising finale, a leading current affairs program aired a satirical sketch featuring a crudely caricatured puppet of Owsiak collecting money and giving it to an opposition politician, then Mayor of Warsaw Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz of the liberal Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO). The sketch also included an anti-Semitic subtext, as some of the banknotes being distributed in the animation were marked with a star of David. The whole segment was later taken off the air, and the news director apologized for the "dissemination of anti-Semitic stereotypes."⁶⁵ Poland's ombudsman criticized both the anti-Semitic references and the unsubstantiated accusations of embezzlement against Owsiak—part of a broader pattern of insinuations.⁶⁶

Only a few days later, on 13 January, opposition politician and mayor of Gdańsk Paweł Adamowicz was stabbed on the stage at a Great Orchestra finale concert in his home city. The perpetrator seized the microphone and shouted that he had been unjustly imprisoned and "tortured" by Adamowicz's former party—opposition PO. The Mayor died shortly afterwards. The day after the tragedy, public television news depicted Owsiak and opposition politicians themselves as indirectly responsible for the murder through their supposed creation of a growing climate of hate speech.⁶⁷ PiS MP Krystyna Pawłowicz—who had previously launched multiple tirades against Owsiak—attacked him on social media, accusing him of spreading hate and slandering the Church.⁶⁸ Since then, the negative campaign against the Orchestra has continued sporadically, involving prominent PiS politicians, PiS-friendly media, and public institutions.⁶⁹ But what were the specific causes of this sustained government hostility towards a charitable organization?

The attacks on Owsiak and the Great Orchestra have been motivated and legitimated by "thickened" versions of PiS's right-wing discourse and its antecedents, combining both cultural and political dimensions. First, the charity is viewed as a front for a progressive cultural agenda at odds with traditional values, and especially with the doctrine of the Catholic Church. This critique dates back to the early 2000s, when it was first propagated by Father Rydzyk's media in response to the loose, youth-culture style of Owsiak's presentation and the celebratory atmosphere of the

Woodstock Station concerts. According to these critics, Owsiak and his collaborators disseminate a morally relativist ideology of individual freedom and hedonism without responsibility or restraint.⁷⁰

Rydzzyk's media and other Catholic conservatives have also attacked the music festival, the charity, and especially its leader for their alleged support of the so-called "civilization of death"—a pejorative term denoting advocacy of rights to contraception, abortion, or voluntary euthanasia. The evidence for these claims includes various public statements from Owsiak on these subjects and his presence together with other members of the Great Orchestra foundation at the 2016 "Black Protest" against proposals to tighten Poland's already strict abortion laws.⁷¹ On this basis, some representatives of PiS and wider conservative circles have even advised Poles against giving to the Orchestra, proposing the transfer of donations to Caritas, a large charity linked to the Church.⁷²

In this case, a kind of symbolic moral supremacy is at stake, with the Orchestra represented as an illegitimate rival to the Church both in the values it represents and in its specific charitable activities. Caritas has distanced itself from the government's attacks, insisting that it is not in competition with the Orchestra.⁷³ Nevertheless, by criticizing the Orchestra, PiS members and their allies have publicly placed themselves on the side of the Church in a contest of values, reinforcing shared ideological positions against the supposed threat of permissive freedoms and "gender" ideology. For the same reason, Kaczyński has argued during election campaigns that the Church is the sole source of moral values in Polish culture, and that only "nihilism" lies outside it.⁷⁴ Such declarations—together with the campaign against the Orchestra and other ideological enemies—enact a political calculation, with PiS counting on the open or implicit support of Rydzzyk's media, hardline bishops, and other conservative members of the Church.⁷⁵

These moral and cultural arguments have also been intertwined with a narrative about the Orchestra's specific political function in post-1989 Poland. Critics claim that the charity and its founder have entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with the post-communist political establishment of the "Third Polish Republic." According to this narrative—also established long before PiS came to power—liberal and left-wing political actors have used the Orchestra both as a distraction from their unscrupulous exercising of political power and as a tool to force a progressive cultural agenda. In return, Owsiak and the Orchestra have been promoted and supported by state institutions and media.⁷⁶ From this point of view, the charity and its founder are propaganda creations of the "Third Republic"—garish, liberal, and opposed both to traditional conservative values and to right-wing political parties.⁷⁷

This skeptical interpretation of the Orchestra's achievements includes a key thread running back to the 1980s. Just as PiS and its ideological allies have sometimes presented the post-1989 "Third Republic" as a continuation of the Polish People's Republic (PRL), they have often traced Owsiak's methods and success back to the communist period.⁷⁸ According to the critics, from his early days as a

promoter of rock music, Owsiak was a cultural tool of an intentional strategy of the communist security services to distract young people from protest against the regime. In his role as a television presenter and disseminator of western youth culture, he supposedly channeled the potential for youthful rebellion in harmless directions. In this way, he provided a “safety valve” for the authorities in a period of social unrest after the “Solidarity” revolution and Martial Law.⁷⁹

This alleged collusion with the communist authorities—for which there is no clear evidence—supposedly set the agenda for Owsiak’s activities after 1989, including the establishment of the Great Orchestra. In extreme versions of the narrative, this continuity literally implies that Owsiak is still working for his communist security service “minders.”⁸⁰ In this light, the Orchestra’s activities are an ideological front for the continued influence of the shadowy post-communist *układ*—the network of former security operatives and communist party members supposedly controlling Poland’s post-1989 business and politics. Owsiak and his Orchestra form part of the cultural arm, whose purpose is now to erode traditional Polish values associated with the Catholic Church and to “inoculate” the youth against any tendency to question or rebel against the post-communist order.⁸¹

In a televised public discussion with a Catholic bishop shortly before the 2019 elections to the European Parliament, Kaczyński himself explained the mechanism of the “safety valve” and Owsiak’s alleged role:

[This is] the continuation of pacification methods of social engineering that the communists used in the time of Martial Law. The dissemination of all these messages associated with sex. That’s Owsiak, who is an element of the late social engineering of Martial Law, when preparations were being made for the transition.⁸²

Here Kaczyński references theories that Poland’s transition was managed or even orchestrated by communist elites seeking to defend their interests in the face of inevitable change.⁸³ In this way, he connects the cultural questions that Owsiak primarily represents with PiS’s broader political narrative of an “unfinished” transition to be completed through the “good change.” As a propagator of a liberal cultural agenda, Owsiak appears as an agent of the political and economic interests of the post-communist establishment. He is part of the “pseudo-elite” to be overthrown and replaced by a legitimate “counter-elite.” Since this goal cannot be achieved directly, the ruling party attacks him through a combination of withdrawal of state support and negative propaganda. At the same time, this propaganda itself serves to further “thicken” PiS’s transition narrative with the cultural “glue” of a pre-existing right-wing reaction to advocacy of women’s rights, LGBT rights, and progressive values. By attacking the Orchestra, PiS uses this “cultural backlash” to reinforce its political narrative, while also shoring up the support of key allies like Rydzyk and other Catholic conservatives.

PiS evinces a fundamental “hermeneutics of suspicion” towards civil society. From a strongly elite-centric perspective, the party expresses distrust of the notion

that civil society organizations could embody or combine the diverse motivations and activities of multiple social actors. Instead, right-wing critics of the Great Orchestra and other NGOs have sought to expose the role of “establishment elites” in the promotion of supposedly illegitimate political, economic, and cultural models in the service of foreign interests or the post-communist *układ*. At the same time, the ruling coalition has set about consolidating its own civil society “counter-elite.”

Promotion of the “Counter-elite”: The National Freedom Institute

PiS’s network of affiliated civil society organizations existed long before the party came to power. Indeed, some of these groups contributed significantly to its 2015 electoral success by mobilizing a core base of supporters through organized promotion of the party’s political narratives.⁸⁴ Ewa Dąbrowska characterizes these groups as an “alternative civil society” or “discourse coalition”—a wide and diverse front of ideologically conservative organizations.⁸⁵ The “thickening” of public culture and resulting discursive opportunities for PiS described by Kotwas and Kubik have reflected the influence of these organizations, many of them connected to the party. Nevertheless, PiS’s politicization of civil society since 2015 has not generally followed the Hungarian model of creating subordinate bodies merely “masquerading” as independent organizations.⁸⁶ Instead, the party has used state instruments to strengthen a pre-existing, partly autonomous, right-wing coalition. The latest tool for this strategy is the National Freedom Institute—Center for Civil Society Development.

In 2016, when the government first announced plans to create this institution, domestic and international observers noted a lack of transparency and consultation as well as the potential for politicization or control of civil society.⁸⁷ Many expressed concerns that the new Institute would be biased towards certain ideological options, pointing out that the preamble to the law establishing it specifically mentioned “the Christian ideals of citizens” to the exclusion of other value systems.⁸⁸ One of the five NGO members of the Council of the Institute represents the *Ordo Iuris* Institute, an ultra-conservative Catholic association of lawyers best known for its proposal of the abortion ban that provoked the “Black Protest” in which Jerzy Owsiak and members of the Great Orchestra foundation participated.⁸⁹ The first round of substantial funding grants from the National Freedom Institute in August 2019 appeared to bear out the observers’ concerns.⁹⁰

In this grant program, close to PLN 86 million was distributed among 154 organizations.⁹¹ Although apolitical local organizations constitute the majority on the list, there is also a disproportionate presence of beneficiaries that are ideologically, politically, or personally linked to the ruling party and its allies.⁹² By my estimate—on the basis of the findings of Polish journalists and my own additional research—at least 20 organizations with direct links to ruling coalition politicians and activists received

funding.⁹³ A further 14 successful applicants are linked with PiS allies, right-wing ideology, or with politicians from the right-wing populist Kukiz15' parliamentary grouping. Twenty-four successful applicants are affiliated with the Church or with Catholic values.⁹⁴ I found no evidence of analogous support for organizations strongly linked to other opposition parties or to non-conservative values. Admittedly, such organizations may simply not have applied for funding, as I found no clear evidence of applications rejected for ideological reasons.

Among the party-affiliated individuals with formal roles in funded organizations are three deputy ministers, the head of the Prime Minister's Chancellery, multiple members of parliament and local councilors, campaign team members, a former advisor of the Minister of Culture, and PiS-appointed members of state institutions.⁹⁵ Many of the associated organizations received the highest possible grant of PLN 700,000; some of them were already being supported financially by state-owned companies. Significant grants also went to two pro-PiS media foundations, a pro-PiS organization dedicated to defending Poland's "good name," a nationalist organization that made headlines for its opposition to an LGBT rights march in Białystok, and a right-wing NGO "confederation" linked to two members of the Council of the National Freedom Institute, including Tymoteusz Zych, the representative of the ultra-conservative Ordo Iuris Institute.⁹⁶ Zych is also the president of another organization that received the maximum grant.⁹⁷

Few of these organizations linked with the ruling coalition are explicitly political in their operations. Some of them are locally focused or charitable in their main aims. However, the majority still show a clear ideological orientation, with missions or activities devoted to the promotion of Christian and conservative values, traditional forms of patriotism, national versions of history, and right-wing political narratives.⁹⁸ In effect, the National Freedom Institute has given PiS a new instrument of public funds for top-down support of its civil society "discourse coalition." In many cases, there is a multiplying effect, with favored organizations also receiving other grants from the Institute as well as access to funds from government ministries, state-owned companies, and government-administered programs of the European Union. The example of one prominent beneficiary demonstrates how PiS both draws on and expands the discursive opportunities offered by friendly organizations.

The Polish League against Defamation (*Reduta Dobrego Imienia—Polska Liga Przeciw Znieważnieniom*)—a right-wing group dedicated to fighting perceived misrepresentations of Polish history abroad—belongs to PiS's "discourse coalition." The organization has contributed significantly to the construction and promotion of right-wing narratives of historical grievance and the so-called "pedagogy of shame." The latter term refers to alleged attempts by hostile foreign forces to make Poles ashamed of their history, especially in regard to Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War.⁹⁹ PiS has used this issue in its political narrative of the "good change," positing its own brand of national self-assertiveness against the acquiescence of its liberal opponents in the "anti-Polish" propaganda of foreign actors.¹⁰⁰ In response to

supposed attempts to shift responsibility for German crimes onto Poland, PiS has promised to defend “our truth about the past.”¹⁰¹ In 2018, the government introduced a controversial “memory law,” which threatened prison terms to anyone convicted of accusing the “Polish nation” of complicity with Nazi German crimes “against the facts.” The law was later amended, reportedly under US pressure.¹⁰²

The League has received two separate tranches of funding from the National Freedom Institute as well as additional funding from the Foreign Ministry.¹⁰³ Its founder, Maciej Świrski, was appointed to the board of a new state institution, the Polish National Foundation (*Polska Fundacja Narodowa*), tasked with improving Poland’s image abroad. He reportedly played a central role in the preparation of the ill-fated “memory law.”¹⁰⁴ He was also involved in scandal when the Foundation’s funds were used—against its statute—for a domestic billboard campaign promoting the ruling party’s much-criticized judicial reforms.¹⁰⁵

In these interactions with a civil society organization and its leader, PiS has sought to achieve several mutually reinforcing aims. First, the party has utilized the discourse and policy agenda of the League and other groups in its own political communication and legislative program—admittedly, with mixed success. It has then rewarded the organization and its leader with funding, positions, and policy influence. Finally, the organization and its leader have used these benefits and influence for the direct promotion of PiS’s policies and positions. Once again, the party’s strategy is to strengthen its own cultural and political narratives by advancing the ideology and interests of friendly civil society elites.

PiS’s funding of organizations from its discourse coalition also brings practical benefits to its organizational structures. These advantages are especially apparent in the case of a whole ecosystem of interconnected right-wing youth organizations sponsored by the National Freedom Institute and a range of other state sources. At least eight youth organizations with links to the ruling party received funding in the first round of Institute grants. Analysis of the activities and membership of these organizations reveals their partial function as breeding grounds for political and administrative cadres for the ruling coalition, connecting ideologically aligned young people with PiS and its political allies.

For instance, the right-wing Foundation of Youth Initiatives (*Fundacja Inicjatyw Młodzieżowych*) received the maximum grant of nearly PLN 700,000 from the Institute.¹⁰⁶ Its goals are to promote “Christian values” and “patriotic attitudes.”¹⁰⁷ The organization’s founders include multiple figures now associated with PiS.¹⁰⁸ Its other sponsors include two ministries and three state-owned companies. The Foundation has also won a European Union grant of over PLN 1 million, dispensed by the Prime Minister’s Chancellery.¹⁰⁹ One of its activities is the organization of an “Academy of Leaders” for young people. Speakers at the Academy’s events have consisted almost exclusively of high-ranking members of the PiS camp and its right-wing ideological allies.¹¹⁰ Separate sponsors and partners of the Academy include four state-owned companies, the Ordo Iuris Institute, and no less than six other

organizations that also received grants from the National Freedom Institute.¹¹¹ The Foundation of Youth Initiatives has supplied PiS with a local councilor, a member of its presidential and parliamentary election staff, a departmental director in the president's office, and multiple figures in state-owned companies.¹¹²

Another right-wing youth organization, Service to the Independent Republic (*Służba Niepodległej*), also received the maximum grant. In 2018, the group had already obtained separate funding—together with another four right-wing organizations later awarded major grants by the Institute—to organize a forum attended by two deputy prime ministers.¹¹³ In 2014, before PiS came to power, the same forum had been sponsored by the Lech Kaczyński Institute, an NGO controlled by close associates of Jarosław Kaczyński.¹¹⁴ In effect, the funding of the event has been shifted from a party-affiliated source to the state treasury. In 2018, Service to the Independent Republic also received grants totaling almost PLN 500,000 to organize another College of Leaders and a cycle of seminars.¹¹⁵ Current and former members of the Foundation's governing bodies include at least three individuals who have gone on to run as PiS candidates in local elections, two who have joined the PiS Youth Forum, and several others who have had internships in various government ministries. One has even served as an intern at the National Freedom Institute.¹¹⁶

Apart from direct financial benefits, Service to the Independent Republic has also enjoyed other forms of personal and institutional patronage from the highest levels of the ruling party. In 2019, when Minister Glišński set up a new government-backed Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation (*Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem*), the deputy head of Service to the Independent Republic became its inaugural co-chair.¹¹⁷ He had previously been the chair of the Council of Children and Youth of the Republic of Poland (*Rada Dzieci i Młodzieży Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*), a body attached to the Ministry of National Education. Both these youth councils appear to be political instruments for the fostering of new generations of PiS's "counter-elite." In particular, the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation is dominated by representatives of right-wing youth organizations as well as multiple members of PiS's Youth Forum.¹¹⁸

Various other right-wing youth organizations supported by the National Freedom Institute and other state funds exhibit similar political connections with the ruling coalition.¹¹⁹ By mobilizing and coordinating diverse streams of state funding, PiS has fostered an ecosystem of interconnected civil society organizations congenial to its ideology. On multiple levels and with reinforcing feedback effects, the ruling party has backed organizations whose young leaders it has had opportunities to influence, groom, and to feed directly into its own political structures. Such activities inevitably involve initiative and agency on both sides, with diverse actors motivated in different ways and some following trajectories outside PiS's sphere of influence. However, when numerous members of the sponsored organizations have joined PiS or been appointed to positions in state institutions and companies, these groups may be said functionally to exist as forges for the party's "new social hierarchy." By supporting

its broad right-wing “discourse coalition,” PiS reinforces its own cultural and political narratives, while also strengthening its organizational structures.

Conclusion: Civil Society Resistance

This article has argued that PiS and its allies have attempted to enact a strategy of elite replacement in civil society in accordance with a broader rhetoric of “counter-elite” populism. The “old-new elite” of the “Third Polish Republic” must be replaced by a “counter-elite” that will represent the true political, economic, and cultural interests of “the nation”. In civil society, this process has been more partial and moderate than the large-scale replacement of cadres seen in the civil service, the public media, state-owned companies, and the courts. This less radical approach has been necessitated by the lack of direct instruments with which to remove unfavorable elites from independent civil society organizations. In the absence of this direct power, the ruling party and its allies have enacted a two-pronged strategy of *pressure* and *promotion*.

First, they have withdrawn state support from supposedly hostile elites and run smear campaigns against them. Using the compliant tool of a politicized public media, they have attacked civil society leaders like the Great Orchestra’s Jerzy Owsiak, representing them as an “establishment elite” in league with shadowy post-communist, liberal, or foreign political and cultural interests. Second, they have used various public funds—including the resources of the newly formed National Freedom Institute—to support the production of their own civil society “counter-elite,” whose boundaries with the party political elite are porous. In both cases, these strategies further legitimize the right-wing cultural narratives of the “discourse coalition” that helped bring PiS to power in 2015. At the same time, the strategy has delivered very practical benefits in the form of financial support for initiatives linked with party members and mechanisms to feed young talent into PiS’s party system.

PiS’s strategies would appear to threaten the health and independence of civil society in Poland. However, the overall efficacy of its pressure on “unfriendly” organizations remains doubtful. Indeed, the negative campaign against the Great Orchestra has done nothing to dent its success. On the contrary, the Orchestra has set new fundraising records in every year since PiS came to power, with the 2019 drive raising three times more than the 2015 drive. The final figure of almost PLN 176 million in 2019 is more than the entire annual budget of the National Freedom Institute. Some commentators have even speculated that Poles may have donated more generously in direct response to PiS’s negative campaign.¹²⁰ In any case, if the intention of PiS’s campaign was to challenge the Orchestra’s moral and financial hegemony as a leading civil society organization in Poland, then this operation can only be characterized as a failure. On the other hand, the charity’s continued success provides PiS with a discursive enemy for its cultural and political narratives.

More broadly, Jacobsson and Korolczuk point to evidence suggesting that independent civic engagement in Poland—both political and otherwise—is far from being in retreat, with various informal, grassroots initiatives attracting mass support.¹²¹ They argue that protest events like the large demonstrations against the proposed abortion ban represent a major form of civil society engagement often ignored by researchers. Some other NGOs that have fallen victim to defunding or smear campaigns have also seen significant increases in private donations.¹²² Korolczuk asks whether the current circumstances might even represent a “new opening,” forcing the development of a stronger, more independent, and more locally rooted civil society.¹²³ This perspective suggests that grassroots mobilization may have the power to resist the top-down imposition of a politicized “new social hierarchy.”

The level of pressure exerted on civil society in Poland has not yet equaled the strong legal measures taken in Hungary—for instance, through a 2017 law limiting foreign funding.¹²⁴ However, the resistance exemplified by the Great Orchestra and others might also point to the distinctively resilient nature of Polish civil society. While PiS has colonized a significant proportion of the state sector in accordance with its modified “counter-elite” populist logic, the party has not yet enjoyed the same success in delivering elite replacement in civil society. Instead, it has largely consolidated existing polarization of the third sector into broad camps aligned with and opposed to the government (though the majority of NGOs remain non-political).¹²⁵ Poland’s ruling coalition has succeeded in promoting its own civil society elite, but its perceived opponents have so far withstood various forms of negative pressure. The question is: for how much longer? As PiS moves through its second term, the party and its allies will continue their attempts to build “Budapest in Warsaw.”¹²⁶

ORCID iD

Stanley Bill  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4898-6641>

Notes

1. B. Stanley, “Confrontation by Default and Confrontation by Design: Strategic and Institutional Responses to Poland’s Populist Coalition Government,” *Democratization* 23, no. 2 (2016): 267.

2. PiS’s attempted imitation of Orbán’s successful model in Hungary has been explicit since its election defeat in 2011, when Kaczyński promised that “the day will come when there will be Budapest in Warsaw.” See “Przyjdzie dzień, że w Warszawie będzie Budapeszt,” *TVN24* (9 October 2011), <https://tvn24.pl/polska/przyjdzie-dzien-ze-w-warszawie-bedzie-budapeszt-ra186922-3535336>. On “colonization” or “occupation” of the state, see J. W. Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 44; W. Grzebalska and A. Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 68 (2018): 168.

3. J. Kaczyński, *Porozumienie przeciw monowładzy: Z dziejów PC* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2016), 113.

4. *Zdrowie, Praca, Rodzina: Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości 2014*, 26.

5. *Ibid.*

6. J. Kaczyński, *Polska naszych marzeń* (Lublin: Akapit, 2011), 41.

7. *Ibid.*, 49.

8. The notion of “counter-elite populism” is similar to what Zsolt Enyedi characterizes—on the example of Hungary—as “a borderline subtype of populism, best labelled paternalistic populism.” See Z. Enyedi, “Paternalist Populism and Illiberal Elitism in Central Europe,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, no. 1 (2016): 10. As Ben Stanley observes, PiS’s elitist rhetoric does not sit comfortably with the “populist emphasis on popular sovereignty.” See Stanley, “Confrontation by Default,” 267.

9. According to a report for *Puls Biznesu*, the former PO-PSL government made at least four hundred political appointments in various institutions over its first four years in government, while PiS made more than one thousand such appointments in the first year alone. See D. Tokarz, “Teraz k. . . my. Na całego!,” *Puls Biznesu* (15 January 2017), <https://www.pb.pl/teraz-k-my-na-calego-852258> (accessed 5 March 2020). Also see Grażyna Kopińska, *Stanowiska publiczne jako lup polityczny: Polityka personalna w okresie od 16 listopada 2015 do 31 października 2017 roku* (Warszawa: Fundacja Batorego, 2018), http://www.batory.org.pl/upload/files/Programy%20operacyjne/Odpowiedzialne%20Panstwo/Stanowiska_publiczne_jako_lup_polityczny.pdf.

10. For instance, legislative changes were made to allow for purges in the civil service, research institutes, the Institute of National Remembrance, the National Media Council, among many other institutions. See Kopińska, *Stanowiska publiczne jako lup polityczny*.

11. “Poland: Freedom in the World Report 2020,” *Freedom House*, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland/freedom-world/2020>.

12. W. Sadurski, *Poland’s Constitutional Breakdown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4–6.

13. J. Kornai, “Hungary’s U-Turn,” *Society and Economy* 37, no. 3 (2015): 284; Grzebalska and Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland,” 169.

14. M. Kotwas and J. Kubik, “Symbolic Thickening of Public Culture and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Poland,” *East European Politics and Societies & Cultures* 33, no. 2 (2019): 435–71.

15. *Ibid.*, 460.

16. Grzebalska and Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi,” 165.

17. M. Bożewicz, “Komunikat z badań nr 90/2019: ‘Stosunek Polaków do związków homoseksualnych,’” *Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej* (July 2019), https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_090_19.PDF; K. Pacewicz, “Rośnie niechęć Polaków do WSZYSTKICH narodów. „Efekt polityki PiS obłożonej twierdzy”—prof. Bilewicz,” *OKO.press* (14 March 2018), https://oko.press/rosnie-niechec-polakow-wszystkich-narodow-efekt-polityki-pis-oblezonej-twierdzy-prof-bilewicz/?fb_comment_id=1519195158178632_1519252388172909.

18. Kotwas and Kubik, “Symbolic Thickening,” 460.

19. See P. Norris and R. F. Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

20. S. L. de Lange and S. Guerra, “The League of Polish Families between East and West, Past and Present,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 42 (2009): 527–49; B. Stanley, “From Periphery to Power: The Trajectory of Polish Populism, 1989–2012,” in *Populism in Central and Eastern Europe—Challenge for the Future? Documentation of an Expert Workshop*, ed. S. Bachrynowski (Warszawa: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2012), 17.

21. E. Dąbrowska, “New Conservatism in Poland: The Discourse Coalition around Law and Justice,” in *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe*, ed. K. Bluhm and M. Varga (Abingdon, UK: Routledge 2018), 95.

22. The scale of this “rightward drift” should not be exaggerated. As Radosław Markowski points out, PiS’s victory was as much determined by a high number of wasted votes as by any “switches” in voter preferences. See R. Markowski, “The Polish Parliamentary Election of 2015: A Free and Fair Election That Results in Unfair Political Consequences,” *West European Politics* 39, no. 6 (2016): 1311.

23. K. Jacobsson and E. Korolczuk, "Introduction," *Civil Society Revisited: Lessons from Poland*, ed. K. Jacobsson and E. Korolczuk (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 14.

24. See P. Gliński, "Twenty Years of Civil Society in Poland?," *Polish Sociological Review* 175 (2011): 271–300; D. Gawin and P. Gliński, eds., *Civil Society in the Making* (Warsaw: IFIS Publishers, 2006).

25. *Zdrowie, Praca, Rodzina: Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości 2014*, 145.

26. See G. Ekiert and J. Kubik, *Rebellious Civil Society: Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989-1993* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); G. Ekiert and J. Kubik, "Civil Society in Postcommunist Europe: Poland in a Comparative Perspective," in *Civil Society Revisited: Lessons from Poland*, ed. K. Jacobsson and E. Korolczuk (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 39–62.

27. G. Ekiert, J. Kubik, and M. Wenzel, "Civil Society and Three Dimensions of Inequality in Post-1989 Poland," *Comparative Politics* 49, no. 3, Special Issue: Civil Society and Democracy in an Era of Inequality (April 2017): 337–39.

28. Jacobsson and Korolczuk, Introduction, 17–21.

29. See *Flash Eurobarometer 408: European Youth: Report* (Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2015); *Volunteering and Intergenerational Solidarity: Eurobarometer Report* (Brussels: TNS Opinion & Social, 2011); J. Czapiński and T. Panek, eds., *Social Diagnosis: Objective and Subjective Quality of Life in Poland* (Warsaw: The Council for Social Monitoring, 2013), 333–35.

30. Ekiert et al., "Civil Society," 339.

31. *Zdrowie, Praca, Rodzina: Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości 2014*, 14.

32. Gliński, "Twenty Years of Civil Society in Poland?," 284.

33. *Ibid.*

34. "Ustawa z dnia 15 września 2017 r. o Narodowym Instytucie Wolności—Centrum Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego," *Narodowy Instytut Wolności*, <https://niw.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/niw-crso.pdf>.

35. B. Smith, *Polish Civil Society: Adapting to New Pressures: A Report of the CSIS Human Rights Initiative* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies), 7.

36. "Wywiad. Wicepremier Gliński: Mądre państwo powinno wzmacniać słabszego. Z funduszy publicznych zacząć korzystać małe, lokalne organizacje," *wPolityce.pl* (30 March 2017), <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/333701-nasz-wywiad-wicepremier-glinski-madre-panstwo-powinno-wzmacniac-slabszego-z-funduszy-publicznych-zaczna-korzystac-male-lokalne-organizacje?strona=1>.

37. Gliński, "Twenty Years of Civil Society in Poland?," 284. Also see A. Gąsior-Niemiec and P. Gliński, "Europeanization of Civil Society in Poland," *Revija za socijalnu politiku* 14, no. 1 (2007): 29–47.

38. A. Giza-Poleszczuk, "(Mis)understanding Social Activism in Poland," in *Civil Society Revisited: Lessons from Poland*, ed. K. Jacobsson and E. Korolczuk (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 65. Also see P. Załęski, *Neoliberalizm i społeczeństwo obywatelskie* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012).

39. Ekiert et al., "Civil Society," 335.

40. Gliński, "Twenty Years of Civil Society in Poland?," 278.

41. P. Trudnowski, "Zagraniczne pieniądze kręcą polską polityką? Soros, aborcja i polskie NGO," *Klub Jagielloński* (9 October 2017), <https://klubjagiellonski.pl/2017/10/09/zagraniczne-pieniadze-kraca-polska-polityka-soros-aborcja-i-polskie-ngo/>.

42. M. Nykiel, "RPO walczy z Narodowym Instytutem Wolności. Bodnar sięga po OBWE, które krytykuje wspieranie polskości i chrześcijańskich wartości," *wPolityce.pl* (13 September 2017), <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/357535-tylko-u-nas-rpo-walczy-z-narodowym-instytutem-wolnosci-bodnar-siega-po-obwe-ktore-krytykuje-wspieranie-polskosci-i-chrzescijanskich-wartosci>.

43. I. Krzemiński, "Radio Maryja and Fr. Rydzyk as a Creator of the National-Catholic Ideology," in *Religion, Politics and Values in Poland*, ed. S. P. Ramet and I. Borowik (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 85–112; Stanley, "From Periphery to Power," 16.

44. B. Mikołajewska, “214.158.441 złotych z publicznych pieniędzy na ‘dzieła’ o. Rydzyka,” *OKO.press* (23 July 2019), <https://oko.press/214-238-441-zl-na-dzieła-o-rydzyka/>.

45. Kaczyński, *Porozumienie przeciw monowładzy*, 366–67. Elżbieta Korolczuk and Agnieszka Graff have described the “anti-colonial frame” of this resistance to supposedly foreign ideologies from “the West.” See E. Korolczuk and A. Graff, “Gender as ‘Ebola from Brussels’: The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 4 (2018): 797–821.

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48. See “Arcybiskup Jędraszewski o ‘tęczowej zarazie,’” *TVN 24* (2 August 2019), <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/arcybiskup-marek-jedraszewski-teczowa-zaraza-zamiast-czerwonej,957818.html>.

49. See S. Guerra, “Without Losing My Religion: The Dilemmas of EU Integration in Poland,” *Kultūra ir visuomenė: socialinių tyrimų žurnalas* 2 (2017): 51–68.

50. “Jarosław Kaczyński: Nie może być Polski bez kościoła,” *Radio Maryja* (5 December 2015), <https://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/jaroslaw-kaczynski-nie-moze-byc-polski-bez-kościoła/>.

51. Grzebalska and Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi,” 166.

52. H. Margolis, “‘The Breath of the Government on My Back’: Attacks on Women’s Rights in Poland,” *Human Rights Watch* (6 February 2019), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/02/06/breath-government-my-back/attacks-womens-rights-poland>; P. Marczewski, “Freedom to Exclude: Conservative CSOs in Law and Justice Poland,” *Carnegie Europe* (4 October 2018), <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2018/10/04/freedom-to-exclude-conservative-csos-in-law-and-justice-poland-pub-77377>; Human Rights First, “Poland’s New Front: A Government’s War against Civil Society” (2017), <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/Poland-Report-August-2017.pdf>.

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Stanley Bill, PhD, is Senior Lecturer in Polish Studies and Director of the Polish Studies Programme at the University of Cambridge. He works on contemporary Polish politics and twentieth-century Polish literature and culture. He has particular interests in populist discourse, postcolonial interpretations of Polish cultural and political history, the poetics of the body, religion and secularization, and Polish–Ukrainian relations. He has written on monism and pluralism in Polish politics (with Ben Stanley), postcolonial theory in the Polish context, legacies of Polish Romanticism, and the works of Czesław Miłosz and Bruno Schulz. He is the Chair of the Cambridge Committee for Russian and East European Studies (CamCREES). He recently spent a term as Early Career Research Fellow at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (CRASSH) at the University of Cambridge, where he worked on the structure and origins of contemporary populist discourse in Poland in terms of postcolonial theory. He is also founder and editor-at-large of the news and opinion website and social media hub *Notes from Poland*.